

REPTILIA: SQUAMATA: TEIIDAE

AMEIVA CORAX

Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles.

White, A.M., E.J. Censky, and R. Powell. 2002. *Ameiva corax*.

Ameiva corax Censky and Paulson

Ameiva corax Censky and Paulson 1992:187. Type locality, "south side of Little Scrub Island, off the northeastern tip of Anguilla." Holotype, Museum of Comparative Zoology (MCZ) 77137 (original number ASFS X100), an adult male, collected 23 May 1962 by R.F. Klinikowski (examined by EJC).

• **CONTENT.** No subspecies are recognized.

• **DEFINITION.** *Ameiva corax* is a moderately sized member of the genus *Ameiva* (maximum SVL of males = 132 mm, of females = 100.5 mm). Granular scales around the body number 127–159 (\bar{x} = 144.0 \pm 2.0, N = 51), transverse rows of ventral scales range from 30–37 (\bar{x} = 33.2 \pm 0.4, N = 53), fourth toe subdigital lamellae number 33–42 (\bar{x} = 36.8 \pm 0.6, N = 58), fifteenth caudal verticil number 28–38 (\bar{x} = 33.2 \pm 0.5, N = 57), and the number of femoral pores (both legs) ranges between 58–72 (\bar{x} = 62.1 \pm 0.8, N = 58).

Dorsal and lateral coloration is very dark brown to slate black, usually patternless. Some individuals have faint cream spots on the lower flanks and the posterior portion of the body. A few smaller individuals show faint remnants of lighter stripes. The head may be slightly lighter than the body in some individuals, but the overall effect is of a black, unicolored lizard. The venter is equally dark to only slightly lighter, especially under the tail, sometimes with a bluish cast and a variable number of lighter gray flecks. The chin is often brown.

• **DIAGNOSIS.** *Ameiva corax* occurs on the Anguilla Bank with *A. plei*, which is widely distributed on the Bank (Censky 1998). *Ameiva corax* can be readily distinguished from the latter by the largely patternless, melanistic coloring of *A. corax* (*A. plei* has either distinct stripes in juveniles or spots in adults), by lower granular scale counts around the body (135–179, \bar{x} = 159.8 \pm 0.7 in *A. plei*), and by fewer femoral pores (37–56, \bar{x} = 45.5 \pm 0.18 in *A. plei*) (Censky and Paulson 1992, Censky 1998).

Ameiva corax is most similar in appearance to *A. corvina*, which is endemic and restricted to Sombrero Island. These species can be distinguished by fewer fourth toe lamellae (\bar{x} = 40.5 \pm 1.1 in *A. corvina*) and greater number of femoral pores in *A. corax* (\bar{x} = 57.3 \pm 3.2 in *A. corvina*).

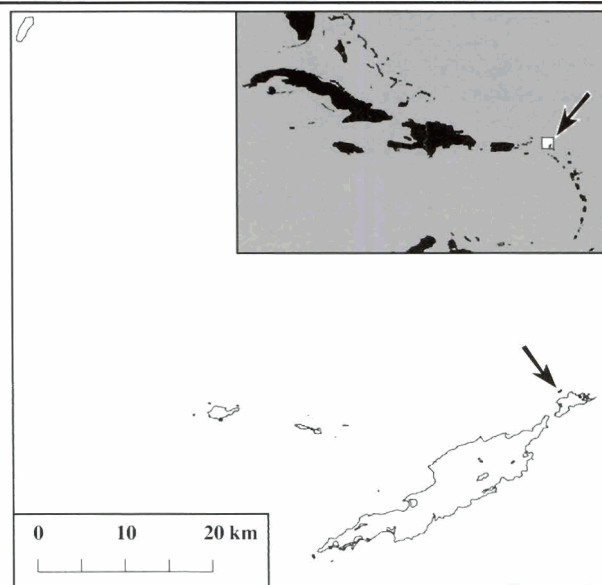
• **DESCRIPTIONS.** The only description of the species is the original of Censky and Paulson (1992).

• **ILLUSTRATIONS.** Color photographs appeared in Henderson (2001) and Censky and Powell (2001).

• **DISTRIBUTION.** *Ameiva corax* is endemic to Little Scrub Island off the northeastern coast of Anguilla, where it is quite common in cactus-dominated vegetation and the rocky area near the sand patch on the leeward side. Lizards are less common in other areas. The range was illustrated in Censky and Paulson (1992).

• **FOSSIL RECORD.** None.

• **PERTINENT LITERATURE.** Censky and Paulson (1992) described the species in their revision of the Anguilla Bank



MAP. The arrow indicates the location of Little Scrub Island, the type locality and entire range of *Ameiva corax*.



FIGURE. *Ameiva corax* from Little Scrub Island, Anguilla.

Ameiva. They also suggested that this species and the other two melanistic forms from the Lesser Antilles (*A. corvina* and *A. atrata*, the latter found only on Redonda Island; Baskin and Williams 1966), all of which occur on small, barren islands with relatively dark substrates, are cryptically colored due to selective predation pressures. An article in an Anguillian monthly for tourists (Anonymous 2000) described an ongoing investigation of *A. corax* by Karim Hodge of the Anguilla National Trust. Censky and Powell (2001) described habitat, probable causes of melanism, some aspects of behavior, and conservation status. White et al. (2002) compared thermal biology with that of *A. plei*, and Powell and Censky (2002) noted feeding behavior.

The species has been included in checklists by Frank and Ramus (1995), Powell et al. (1996), and Censky and Kaiser (1998).

• **REMARKS.** Baskin and Williams (1966) indicated that the entire Anguilla Bank, including Little Scrub Island, comprised the range of *Ameiva plei*. Schwartz and Thomas (1975) specifically included Little Scrub Island in the range of *A. plei*. Also, on the distribution map for *A. plei* in Schwartz and Henderson (1991), a dot was placed on Little Scrub Island. These records and the presence of specimens in museum collections at least

since 1962 would suggest that these authors (and possibly some earlier writers) considered *A. corax* to be a melanistic population of *A. plei*.

• **ETYMOLOGY.** The specific epithet, *corax*, is from the Greek, meaning raven-black, in reference to the coloration of the lizard and in allusion to this species' similarity to *A. corvina* (Censky and Paulson 1992).

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